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## Introduction

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NOAA Fisheries has the responsibility for the stewardship of the Nation's living marine resources. To achieve this mission, it is vital that our fisheries managers are provided with the best possible information. The information consists of many different parts. Catch, effort, biological, ecological, sociological, and economic data are all important.

The Trip Interview Program (TIP) was developed by the Southeast Fisheries Science Center (SEFSC) as a shore-based sampling program. The primary focus of the TIP is the collection of random size-frequency data and biological samples from commercial marine fisheries. Biological samples include age, reproductive, prey, and genetic data. In addition to collecting biological data, the TIP serves as a quality assurance on catch and effort data. It validates species composition of catch and type and quantity of gear through first hand, trained observation. Other important information, obtained through personal interviews with the fishermen and dealers, also serves the quality assurance purpose.

The TIP is a major component of the Atlantic Coastal Cooperative Statistics Program (ACCSP) in the southeastern U.S. Atlantic coastal region and the Commercial Fisheries Information Network (COMFIN) in the U.S. Gulf of Mexico coastal region. It also collects data from Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

This manual provides comprehensive instructions for TIP data collection, coding, and submission. These standards and procedures are to be followed for all sampling that is conducted by SEFSC employees, as well as state personnel, universities, and private consulting firms that are under grants or contractual arrangements with SEFSC/NOAA Fisheries.

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